

Editor's Note: Dom Prosper-Louis-Pascal Gueranger, was founder of the Benedictine Congregation of France and first abbot of Solesmes Abbey. He is famous for his magnificent multi-volume work *The Liturgical Year*. In 1840, he wrote his *Liturgical Institutions* in order to restore among the clergy (after the French revolution) the knowledge and the love for the Roman Liturgy. Presented here is a fragment of the *Liturgical Institutions*, where Dom Gueranger summarizes what he calls the anti-liturgical heresy, a summary of the doctrine and liturgical practice of the Protestant sect, from the 16th to the 19th Century. As can easily be seen, many of these principles have a striking similitude with the post-Conciliar liturgical reform. Michael Davies, writing in his book *Pope John's Council* on Dom Gueranger's "Anti-Liturgical Heresy," said "The extent to which various features of the 'anti-liturgical heresy' described by Dom Gueranger, and the consequences which he claims follow inevitably, have become part of the practical reform which, officially or unofficially, has followed the Council, varies not only from country to country but from parish to parish."

1)

The first characteristic of the anti-liturgical heresy is **hatred of Tradition as found in the formulas used in Divine Worship**.¹ One cannot fail to note this special characteristic in all heretics, from Vigilantus to Calvin, and the reason for it is easy to explain.

Every sectarian who wishes to introduce a new doctrine finds himself, unfailingly, face to face with the Liturgy, which is Tradition at its strongest and best, and he cannot rest until he has silenced this voice, until he has torn up these pages which recall the faith of past centuries.

As a matter of fact, how could Lutheranism, Calvinism, and Anglicanism establish themselves and maintain their influence over the masses? All they had to do was substitute new books and new formulas in place of the ancient books and formulas, and their work was done. There was nothing that still bothered the new teachers; they could just go on preaching as they wished: the faith of the people was henceforth without defense.

Luther understood this doctrine with a shrewdness worthy of the Jansenists, since he, at the beginning of his innovations, at the time he still felt he should maintain a part of the external form of the Latin cult, gave the following rule for the reformed Mass:

"We approve and preserve the Introits of Sundays and of the feasts of Our Lord, that is to say Easter, Pentecost and Christmas. We should much prefer that the entire Psalms from the Introits should be taken, as was done in former times; but we will gladly conform to the present usage. We do not blame even those who would wish to keep even the Introits of the Apostles, of the Blessed Virgin and other Saints, since these three Introits are taken from

the psalms and other places in Scripture.”

He hated too much the sacred songs composed by the Church herself as the public expression for her faith. He felt too much in them the vigor of Tradition, which he wanted to ban. If he granted to the Church the right to mix her voice with the oracles of the Scripture in the holy assemblies, he would expose himself thereby to have to listen to millions of mouths anathematizing his new dogmas. Therefore, his hatred for everything in Liturgy which does not exclusively derive from Holy Scripture.

2)

This, as a matter of fact, is the second principle of the anti-liturgical sect: **to substitute for the formulas of the ecclesiastical teachings readings from the Holy Scripture.**

This involves two advantages: first, to silence the voice of Tradition of which sectarians are always afraid. Then, there is the advantage of propagating and supporting their dogmas by means of affirmation and negation. By way of negation, in passing over in silence, through cunning, the texts which express doctrine opposed to errors they wish to propagate; by way of affirmation, by emphasizing truncated passages which show only one side of the truth, hide the other from the eyes of the unlearned.

For many centuries we have known that the preferences given by all heretics to holy Scripture, over Church definitions, has no other reason than to facilitate making the word of God say all they want it to say, and manipulating it at will.(...)

Protestants ... have nearly reduced the whole Liturgy to the reading of Scripture, accompanied by speeches in which one interprets by means of reason. As to the choice and determination of the canonical books, these have ended by falling under the caprice of the reformer, who, in final analysis, decides the meaning of the word itself.

Thus Luther finds that in his system of pantheism, the ideas of the uselessness of good works and faith alone sufficing should be established as dogmas, and so, from now on, he will declare that the Epistle of St. James is a “straw epistle” and not canonical, for the simple reason that it teaches the necessity of good works for salvation.

In every age, and under all forms of sectarianism, it will be the same: No ecclesiastical formulas, only Holy Scripture, but interpreted, selected, presented by the person or persons who are seeking to profit from innovation.

The trap is dangerous for the simple, and only a long time afterwards one becomes aware of

having been deceived and that the word of God, “a two-edged sword”, as the Apostles call it, has caused great wounds, because it has been manipulated by the sons of perdition.

3)

The third principle of the heretics concerning the reform of the Liturgy is, having eliminated the ecclesiastical formulas and proclaimed the absolute necessity of making use only of the words of Scripture in divine worship and having seen that Holy Scripture does not always yield itself to all their purposes as they would like, their third principle, we say, is to fabricate and introduce various formulas, filled with perfidy, by which the people are more surely ensnared in error, and thus the whole structure of the impious reform will become consolidated for the coming centuries.

4)

One will not be astonished at the contradictions which heresy shows in its works, when one knows that the fourth principle, or, if you will, the fourth necessity imposed on the sectarians by the very nature of their rebellious state is an habitual contradiction of their own principles.

It must be this way for their confusion on that great day, which will come sooner or later, when God will reveal their nakedness to the view of the people whom they have seduced; moreover, it is not in the nature of man to be consistent. Truth alone can be consistent.

Thus, all the sectarians without exceptions begin with **the vindication of the rights of antiquity**. They want to cut Christianity off from all that the errors and passions of man have mixed in; from whatever is “false” and “unworthy of God”. All they want is the primitive, and **they pretend to go back to the cradle of Christian institutions**.

To this end, they prune, they efface, they cut away; everything falls under their blows, and **while one is waiting to see the original purity of the divine cult reappear, one finds himself encumbered with new formulas dating only from the night before**, and which are incontestably human, since the one who created them is still alive.

Every sect undergoes this necessity. We saw this with the Monophysites and the Nestorians; we find the same in every branch of Protestantism. **Their preference for preaching antiquity led only to cutting them off from the entire past**. Then they placed themselves before their seduced people and they swore to them that now all was fine, that the papist accretions had disappeared, that the divine cult was restored to its primitive form

...

5)

Since the liturgical reform is being undertaken by the sectarians with the same goal as the reform of dogma, of which it is the consequence, it follows that as Protestants separated from unity in order to believe less, they found themselves led to cut away in the Liturgy **all the ceremonies, all the formulas which express mysteries.**

They called it superstition, idolatry, everything that did not seem to be merely rational, thus, limiting the expression of faith, obscuring by doubt and even negation all the views which open on the supernatural world.

Thus, no more Sacraments, except Baptism, preparing the way for Socialism, which freed its followers even from Baptism. No more sacramentals, blessings, images, relics of Saints, processions, pilgrimages, etc. **No more altar, only a table, no more sacrifice as in every religion, but only a meal.** No more church but only a temple, as with the Greeks and Romans. No more religious architecture, since there is no more mystery. No more Christian paintings and sculpture, since there is no more sensible religion. Finally no more poetry in a cult which is no longer impregnated by love or faith.





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6)

The suppression of the mystical element in the Protestant liturgy was bound to produce, infallibly, the total extinction of that spirit of prayer, which in Catholicism, we call unctio.

A heart in revolt can no longer love, a heart without love will be all the more able to produce passable expression of respect or fear, with the cold pride of the Pharisee. Such is Protestant liturgy.

7)

Pretending to treat nobly with God, Protestant liturgy has no need of intermediaries. To invoke the help of the Blessed Virgin, or the protection of Saints, would be, for them, a lack

of respect due to the Supreme Being.

Their liturgy excludes that entire “papist idolatry” which asks from a creature what only should be asked from God. It purges the calendar of all those names of men, which the Roman Church so boldly inscribes next to the name of God. It has a special horror for those names of monks and other persons of later times who one can find figuring next to the names of the Apostles, whom Jesus Christ had chosen, and by whom was founded this primitive Church which alone was pure in faith and free from all superstition in cult and from every relaxation in morals.

8)

Since the liturgical reform had for one of its principal aims the abolition of actions and formulas of mystical signification, it is a logical consequence that its authors had to vindicate **the use of the vernacular in divine worship.**

This is in the eyes of sectarians a most important item. Cult is no secret matter. The people, they say, must understand what they sing. Hatred for the Latin language is inborn in the hearts of all the enemies of Rome. They recognize it as the bond among Catholics throughout the universe, as the arsenal of orthodoxy against all the subtleties of the sectarian spirit. (...)

The spirit of rebellion which drives them to confide the universal prayer to the idiom of each people, of each province, of each century, has for the rest produced its fruits, and the reformed themselves constantly perceive that the Catholic people, in spite of their Latin prayers, relish better and accomplish with more zeal the duties of the cult than most do the Protestant people. At every hour of the day, divine worship takes place in Catholic churches. The faithful Catholic, who assists, leaves his mother tongue at the door. Apart from the sermons, he hears nothing but mysterious words which, even so, are not heard in the most solemn moment of the Canon of the Mass. Nevertheless, this mystery charms him in such a way that he is not jealous of the lot of the Protestant, even though the ear of the latter doesn't hear a single sound without perceiving its meaning. (...)

... We must admit it is a master blow of Protestantism to have declared war on the sacred language. If it should ever succeed in destroying it, it would be well on the way to victory. **Exposed to profane gaze, like a virgin who has been violated, from that moment on the Liturgy has lost much of its sacred character, and very soon people find that it is not worthwhile putting aside one's work or pleasure in order to go and listen to what is being said in the way one speaks at the marketplace.(...)**

9)

In taking away from the Liturgy the mystery which humbles reason, Protestantism took care not to forget the practical consequence, that is to say, liberation from the fatigue and the burden of the body imposed by the rules of the papist Liturgy.

First of all, no more fasting, no more abstinence, no more genuflections in prayer. For the ministers of the temple, no more daily functions to carry out, no more canonical prayers to recite in the name of the Church.

Such is one of the principal forms of the great Protestant emancipation: **to diminish the sum of public and private prayers.**

The course of events has quickly shown that faith and charity, which are nourished by prayers, were extinguished in the reform, whereas among Catholics both still nourish all the acts of devotion to God and men, since they are impregnated by the ineffable resources of liturgical prayer as accomplished by the secular and regular clergy, and in which the community of the faithful participate.

10)

Since Protestantism had to establish a rule in order to distinguish among the papist institutions those which could be the most hostile to its principle, it had to rummage around in the foundations of the Catholic structure to find the corner stone on which everything rests. Its instinct caused it to discover first of all that dogma which is irreconcilable with every innovation: Papal authority. When Luther wrote on his flag: "Hatred for Rome and its laws", he only promulgated once more the underlying principle of every branch of the anti-liturgical sect.² From then on he had to abrogate, "en masse" both cult and ceremonies as the idolatries of Rome. The Latin language, the Divine Office, the calendar, the breviary: **all** were abominations of the great Harlot of Babylon. The Roman Pontiff weighs down reason by his dogmas and the sense by his ritual practices. Therefore, it must be proclaimed that his dogmas are only blasphemy and error, and his liturgical observances nothing but a means of establishing more firmly a usurped and tyrannical domination.(...)

One should here bring to mind the marvelous reflections of Joseph de Maistre in his book *The Pope*, where he demonstrates with so much wisdom and depth that, in spite of the disagreement which should isolate the sects, there is one thing in which they are all alike, namely, they are non-Roman.

11)

The anti-liturgical heresy needed, in order to establish its reign for good, **the destruction in fact and in principle of all priesthood in Christianity. For it felt that where there is a Pontiff, there is an Altar; and where there is an Altar; there is a sacrifice and the carrying on of a mysterious ceremonial.**

Having abolished the office of Supreme Pontiff, they had to annihilate the character of the bishopric, from which emanates the mystical imposition of hands, which perpetuates the sacred hierarchy. From this derives a great Presbyterianism, which is nothing other than the immediate consequence of the suppression of the Supreme Pontiff. **From now on there is no longer a priest, properly speaking. How could simple election without consecration make a man sacred?** Luther's and Calvin's reforms only know of ministers of God, or of men, as you prefer. But this is not enough. Chosen and established by laymen, bringing into the temple the robe of a certain bastard ministry, the minister is nothing but a layman clothed with accidental functions. In Protestantism there exist only laymen, and this necessarily so, since there is no longer a Liturgy. (...)

Such are the principal maxims of the anti liturgical sect. We certainly did not exaggerate in any way. All we did was to reveal the hundred-times professed doctrines of the writings of Luther, Calvin, the One Hundred Signers of Magdeburg, of Hospinien, Kemnitz, etc. These books are easy to consult. That is to say that what comes out of them is under the eyes of all the world. We thought it useful to throw light on the principal features of sectarianism. It is always profitable to know error.

It is now up to the Catholic logician to draw the conclusions.

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1. All emphasis added by CFN. ↵
2. It is unique to our post-Conciliar period that the recent destruction of a Roman Liturgy was carried out by the Vatican itself, which has become imbued with Modernism and has discarded tradition. What would Dom Gueranger have said of the post-Conciliar Roman pontiffs who have promoted a Protestantized liturgy in the name of ecumenism?

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